

Close, but Blues' early form just enough

Wycombe 2
Barking 1

TWO goals up at half time and seemingly well in command, Wycombe Wanderers threw away their first half advantage and were forced to fight all the way for both Isthmian League points against Barking on Saturday.

Having scored 14 goals in their last two outings, Wanderers were predictably brought down to earth by a Barking side who belied their low position in the table. As ever, the visitors reserved one of their best performances for Loakes Park—and with a shade more luck they could have taken a point.

But Wycombe had done enough—just—in the first half to hold off Barking's spirited revival. At first, the Blues looked to be carrying on where they left off at Oxford last Monday.

Only one man kept the score down to 2-0, goalkeeper Dickinson, who pulled off a string of brilliant saves.

Wycombe fielded three changes from Monday, Alan Gane coming in for only his fifth full league game of the season in place of Rob Williams, who took over as sub for Tony Amos. Derek Gamblin came in for Paul Birdseye at full back.

Dickinson was called into action as early as the second minute, rushing to block Larry Pritchard's shot. Two minutes later John Delaney's header from Hutchinson's corner was plucked down by the 'keeper.

But it was Barking who produced the most clear-cut chance of the opening minutes when big centre half Anderson found enough room to send a header against the upright.

Wanderers were quick to retaliate and after Mick Holifield had gone close, they took a deserved lead in the 11th minute. Accurate passing was the key to the move with Holifield starting it by laying the ball off to Ian Rundle. The full back's low cross was flicked on by Pritchard to Tony Horseman who pulled it back for Keith Searle to lash home his tenth goal.

By
Stuart Earp

Barking came under a good deal of pressure after the breakthrough.

Thanks to their goalkeeper, Barking managed to hold out against the Wycombe raids and prompted by inside forward Waters they fought back well. Waters in fact caused Wycombe more concern after 31 minutes when his snap shot struck the upright. Half a minute later only a brave stop by O'Brien kept Wycombe ahead. Veteran Vic Cogger put in a fierce drive which crashed into O'Brien's face. But after receiving attention, Kevin was able to continue.

Just before half time, Wycombe struck a telling blow with a timely second goal just on 45 minutes. Johnny Hutchinson wormed his way through the defence and was pulled down from behind by Paul Tyler. Referee C. B. White rightly pointed to the spot and Delaney placed his penalty into the left corner. Even Dickinson couldn't stop that one!

Three more minutes of the half brought one unusual incident with O'Brien doing some running repairs to the top of his goal, perched on top of John Delaney's shoulders!

But the humour soon stopped in the second half when once again, Wycombe's old failing became evident. The period after the interval is a dangerous time for Wanderers who seem slow to regain their stride. This period usually lasts for 10-15 minutes. On Saturday, it lasted for too much of the half.

And Barking took full advantage of Wanderers' hesitancy. Fighting much harder, they gained a better percentage of possession and lacked only strikers to finish off their raids.

After Gerry Olson had blocked one effort from Cogger, Barking pulled a goal back through Waters. A long cross from Anderson was met perfectly by the unmarked inside forward to send a powerful header speeding past Kevin O'Brien.

O'Brien had to be on his toes a minute later when an unwise back pass from Gamblin had the 'keeper struggling to keep the ball out of his own net.

With Hutchinson struggling to repeat his excellent form against Oxford and Larry Pritchard fading badly, Wycombe's trouble originated from midfield. Barking's enthusiasm was interrupted only by one glorious piece of football from Keith Searle which received a well deserved round of applause from the spectators. From the half way line Keith beat three men in a great run down the wing before crossing perfectly. Unfortunately there

was no one in the middle to turn it into a goal.

Searle's brilliance put some life into the home side and Gerry Olson brought another fine save from Dickinson after Wycombe's first corner of the half in the 79th minute. But it was an isolated incident and Wanderers seemed dangerously content to sit back on their lead.

It was fitting that Dickinson should have the last word on Saturday. In the 86th minute he dived full length to push Holifield's fierce shot on the turn around the post.

To round off one of the best performances seen at Loakes Park all season, he raced off his line for the final time preventing Holifield from making it a less realistic scoreline.

WYCOMBE—K. O'Brien, I. Rundle, D. Gamblin, G. Olson, J. Delaney, A. Gane, M. Holifield, L. Pritchard, K. Searle, A. Horseman, J. Hutchinson. Sub.: R. Williams.

BARKING—T. Dickinson, A. Butcher, M. Jones, M. Bullman, P. Anderson, P. Tyler, W. Adkins, P. Shorey, V. Cogger, G. Waters, S. Whettel. Sub.: J. Polthet (not used).

Referee: C. B. White (Harrow).

Half-time 2-0. Goalscorers—Wycombe: Searle (11), Delaney pen (45); Barking: Waters (60).

Actual paying attendance: 1,708. Approx. attendance: 2,150.